

ST CATHERINE'S NEWSLETTER

"Be who God wants you to be, and you will set the world on fire." - St Catherine of Siena



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A MESSAGE FROM

MRS MCPHERSON

HEADMISTRESS, ST CATHERINE'S SCHOOL,
TWICKENHAM

It is a pleasure to provide the introduction to this newsletter, which is a celebration of the first half term. Inside you will find a record of our exciting Unity Week, which was a real opportunity for pupil voice and a sign of the girls' great creativity and leadership. There are also articles about successful sport and co-curricular activities, trips, competitions and events. It is as if the unseasonably warm autumn gave the girls extra ambition and energy.

Of course, the beginning of a school year is the time for ambition. In assembly, I asked the girls to listen again to the Gospel of Luke where the disciples are urged to "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." I wonder what might be the 'deep water' ahead for each of our St Catherine's girls. We know this message has nothing to do with danger - it is an invitation to take some risks, to be innovative and creative, and to trust.

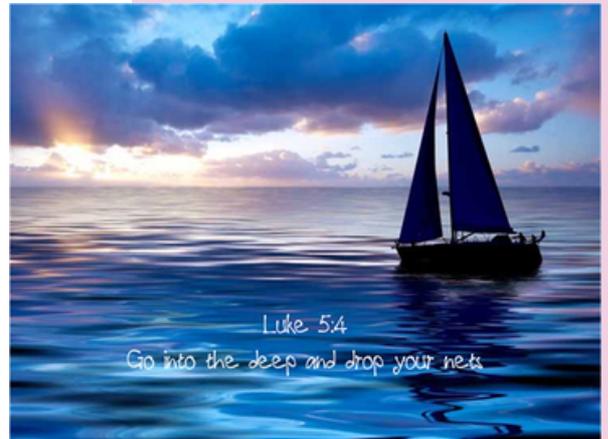
It could include academic ambition, and be an encouragement for them to manage hard work, and find joy in challenges. For this to be healthy and productive they will need to take a well-balanced approach, work with others, and resist any messages - internal or external - that might lead them to think success and change is too difficult, or not for them. They will be supported by their teachers, and I am sure the deep water of learning will bring reward.

In addition, the girls can see that stepping out of the shallows of what is easy means allowing themselves to be open to others - to go into the deep water of being accepting and welcoming toward everyone. And lastly, they are encouraged to go into the deep water of their own inner, spiritual life. Their interest in ethical questions, justice, community, faith, reflection, and the happiest of school hymn singing shows their readiness for this particular adventure, in all its forms.

In short, the symbolism of putting out into the deep water tells us that we must be all in and fully committed if we are to 'set the world on fire'. At St Catherine's we want the girls to say 'yes' to this invitation and to draw up their catch - and we will celebrate their achievements and gifts in lessons, activities, assemblies, and in the newsletters to come.

Before all this learning and fun begins again, we have the half term ahead - I wish you all a very happy break and look forward to seeing you in the second half of term.

With kind regards
Johneen McPherson



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Unity Week



The idea of Unity Week came from Year 9 pupil Kinjal and it was wonderful to see so many pupils leading activities themselves. Read more from Kinjal on page 5.

Thank you to all members of staff who organised, supervised and led activities and to all girls that presented and shared their experiences across the week!

The whole school celebrated Unity Week from 25 to 29 September. This was a jam-packed week full of festivities, dancing, music and delicious food. Prep enjoyed their French Treasure Hunt and African Mask-Making, Years 7 and 9 gave Line Dancing their all.

Years 8 and 10 embraced their inner flamenquitas in their Flamenco class on Tuesday and enjoyed a Ukrainian music lesson on Monday. Year 11 and Sixth Form mastered the head bop in their Bollywood Dance session on Wednesday. PE classes incorporated Paralympic Sports such as Blind Football and Seated Volleyball. Our Unity Week Mass featured prayers in a range of languages spoken across our school community and gave us all the chance to come together and reflect on the meaning of Unity.

The week also featured talks on Racism and Prejudice, Gender and Sexuality, Neurodiversity and What Faith Means to Us. Our celebrations finished with the brilliant Unity Week Festival in which the main hall was transformed into a fabulous selection of student-led stalls and the girls wore their cultural clothing and flag colours with pride.



The Meaning of Unity



In assembly, we focused on the key text from Pope Francis:

"The Lord did not *command* that His disciples be united. No, He *prayed*. He prayed to the Father for us, so that we might be one. This means that we are not able to achieve unity with our own strength. Above all, unity is a gift, it is a grace to be requested through prayer.

To pray means to fight for unity. Division [is] everywhere while God has another way: He takes us as we are, He loves us so much, He loves us as we are. We can ask ourselves if we nurture conflict or fight for an increase of unity with the tools that God has given us: prayer and love. What fuels conflict is gossip, always talking behind people's backs. The Holy Spirit always inspires unity."

[Pope Francis, 2021]



Unity Week Festivities



Before the summer holidays, I had a meeting with Mrs McPherson about introducing a culture day at St Catherine's. I was delighted when Mrs McPherson agreed. In fact, we were soon putting plans in place for a whole week of celebrations! I feel very lucky to have such kind and supportive teachers and fellow pupils. Very quickly, we came up with some fantastic ideas to make the week entertaining and educational, which would follow the St Catherine's School Mission. Many of the teachers contributed as well which was wonderful to see. My team and I had weekly meetings bringing together all of our ideas for the week. We wanted every year group to learn about the importance of other faiths and cultures.

When the week came I was very excited! The week was full of fun activities. On Friday 29 September, St Catherine's held a festive afternoon for all school pupils. There were dances, food stalls, jewellery and so much more. Overall, the experience was wonderful and I am so grateful that so many people contributed. I would like to say a massive thank you to everyone who made Unity Week happen. I am so glad that everyone enjoyed it!

Kinjal, Year 9



Indian Inspired Cuisine



American Deep South Inspired Cuisine



Mexican Inspired Cuisine



Chinese Inspired Cuisine



Italian Inspired Cuisine

Cultural Dress and Flag Colours



African Mask-Making



Year 6 really enjoyed creating African masks in Unity Week. Their designs represented their characters - each unique and different. We were delighted with the finished products.



Seated Volleyball

As part of our paralympic sports experience, Year 11 tried seated volleyball. They did very well and enjoyed this challenging sport.



Dancing



"Flamenco was great, the music and learning new steps was really fun."
- Charlotte, Year 8

"The Bollywood Dance class was my highlight of the week."
- Mia, Year 11



Prep Treasure Hunt



The French treasure hunt was great fun because we got to learn lots of new French words and practise the ones that we already knew.



Scarlett, Year 6

Unity Week Talks

We launched Unity Week with a thought-provoking presentation by Dr Charlie Easmon on 'The History of Prejudice'. Dr Easmon explored examples of prejudice encountered today and encouraged pupils to expand their knowledge of this important subject.

Our talks throughout the week investigated a number of important issues, and the girls made sensitive and thoughtful contributions. The lunchtime talks on gender and sexuality, and neurodiversity attracted an audience of girls from across the Senior school.



“

I really enjoyed the talks in the library. The atmosphere was very supportive and it was very interesting to hear different students' points of view - Milly, Year 9

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UNITY WEEK

'Unity happens when we walk together'
Pope Francis

Prep Trip to Wisley

Year 2 and 3 went on a trip to RHS Wisley as part of their topic on plants this term. The girls took part in a workshop where they were taught how to make a trimming of a plant and start new plant growth. They then explored the life cycle of plants and how the fruits of a plant produce seeds for new growth. They had so much fun and even got to bring home their own plant to start its journey.



Citizenship - Year 6

On Tuesday 19 September, Year 6 ventured to Heatham House and participated in the Junior Citizenship workshop.

During this session, they were placed in 'real life' scenarios and learnt about ways in which they could resolve a problem if one occurred. In addition to this, they learnt about fire safety, stranger danger, ways in which to conduct themselves on a train and bus and also about how to take safe routes when travelling.

This was a valuable experience and the girls thoroughly enjoyed themselves.



GCSE Textiles Trip

On 5 October, GCSE Textile students visited the annual Knitting & Stitching show at Alexandra Palace. This year, the girls were met with bright yellow dusters, which had been hand embroidered, floating above their heads. Each duster was unique, and had been transformed from a cleaning cloth to a 'craftivist' message. This display was designed as a means of discussing women's lived experiences across the world and of challenging the legacy of so called 'women's work'.



A Level Textiles Workshop

Our A Level Textiles students were fortunate enough to enjoy a workshop with Eliza Gomersall, a graduate of the Royal School of Needlework, which is situated in Hampton Court Palace. Eliza won the famous Hand and Lock prize for Textile Art 2023. She is an extremely talented embroidery artist, and it was a fabulous opportunity for the girls to be able to work with her.

Eliza talked to the girls about her graduate work, and her experience working with the teams at Chanel and Alexander McQueen. The workshop was inspiring and showed our pupils how they can aspire to the highest levels in this field.



Year 6 Henley Fort

This half term, Year 6 had the exciting opportunity to visit Henley Fort, near Guildford, for a residential trip experiencing life during World War II. Henley Fort is a Victorian fort that was used by the Home Guard during World War II as a re-supply depot.

Year 6 learnt about what life was like for ordinary people in Britain, including the responsibilities of the ARP – Air Raid Precautions – and Home Guard. We also had an opportunity to hear about the rationing of clothes and food, and even made our own ration-recipe shortbread.



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My favourite activity was dressing up as an ARP warden and I learned that they would have to check everyone had their black outs up. This was to keep buildings safer in the Blitz. We also got to experience what it was like to carry an injured person on a stretcher.

- Sadhbh

”

“

I really enjoyed learning about the ARP wardens and how they put out fires. I liked the activity we did where we had to work together to extinguish fires. This included working in teams to physically pump water through a long hose. We succeeded in putting out the fire- it was hard work!

- Tess

”

“

I really enjoyed walking through the dark underground tunnel in the air raid shelter, experiencing what it was like to walk in absolute darkness, with only a small candle to light the way for so many people.

- Mary

”



National Poetry Day

On Thursday 5 October, as part of our National Poetry Day celebrations, the Library was filled with girls across year groups, all of whom had put pen to paper on the theme of refuge.

The poems were thoughtful, nuanced, evocative and very moving as we each presented our ideas about refuge.

Finding it impossible to choose a 'best' amongst such beautiful and different work we all decided on the lines from each we loved most and have put them together to make the following poem:

Refuge by St Catherine's Senior School



You must be expecting an elaborate thing
A poem about war and other difficult things
I'm speaking of my family,
Who when you falter in your step find light to shine the way
like a fresh hope.

Others must escape to find safety,
Please help them feel less alone.
Surely everyone deserves a chance of bliss,
To follow a path to reach the stars
Instead of a country torn at the seam - for a refugee is lost
with a map
Their stories untold under
the vast, velvet sky that blankets us all,
Where jarring lights dissolve into stars
Within the soft beat of the earth's rhythm
Cats whisper secrets under the parked car's embrace.

I just want to be ordinary, in fact just normal.
My life doesn't rhyme, but that's ok
Refuge is not found in the walls of my childhood home, but
in the walls of my brain
I seek refuge in my mind's innovation
Inside I want to shout
I will not stay quiet
Simple things I long for, simple things in my place of refuge
But I have no home to go to
For refuge is a thing only the privileged can have.



Sixth Form Politics and Sociology Trip

Year 12 and 13 Politics and Sociology pupils were taken on a tour of Westminster Palace. They were told about the history of the UK Parliament, which included exploring how our democracy developed and how it works today. We were also lucky enough to see the Select Committee rooms, which are often closed to the public. This was followed by a tour of Westminster Hall and a Q & A session with Twickenham MP Munira Wilson during which issues such as women in politics and her passion for education were explored.

The girls later had a tour of the Royal Courts of Justice with barrister, Colm Nugent.



Our experience with Colm Nugent was very amusing. We were shown around and given a history and background talk of each area within the courts that we were in; we were also told how the courts operate and what a day in the life of a member who worked at 'the Inn' looked like.



Afterwards, we proceeded to a RCJ workshop on the legality of stop and search where we got to experience what it might be like to be in court in the roles of a Defendant, Claimant and a Judge. We all enjoyed ourselves very much and had the chance to write our own statements and get a taste of what it is like to be in court arguing a case.

Lastly, we were able to talk to Master Lisa Sullivan, which was very interesting and gave us a better understanding of what it's like being a woman in court. Master Sullivan also spoke about why we should study Law at university, and told anecdotes about some of her most exciting cases, including her judgment in *Corbyn v Evans*. It was really inspiring and definitely gave us a better understanding of careers in Law.

Rhea, Year 12

Year 11 Theology Trip

Four aspiring scholars from Year 11 attended St Mary's University Theology Conference on 15 September. Rebecca, Ellyse, Issie and Lybah enjoyed hearing lectures on the topics of Secularism, Bioethics and Mariology, as well as touring the campus. The girls were model ambassadors for the school and matched the sixth formers in attendance by their participation and maturity.

Year 11 Retreat

On Friday 6 October, Year 11 travelled to Restore Hope Latimer, set in the heart of the Chilterns, for their annual retreat day. The day focused on self-care and wellness, looking at what the Bible says about Sabbath rest and also practical ways to ensure rest. The girls took part in lots of wellness activities including a 'wellness walk', journaling and a mindfulness meditation session. One pupil said, "It was great. It felt really freeing to run across the fields as we're not able to go to the countryside much" and another said, "I was really grateful to have some time to reflect." Retreats are an important part of the spiritual and emotional wellbeing of our pupils' time at St Catherine's, and we are very pleased that they benefited so much from their time at Restore Hope Latimer.



Pet Blessing

On 4 October we celebrated Saint Francis of Assisi day by blessing our pets. We welcomed Beano the Cocker Spaniel with Daisy, and Maxine the guinea pig with Evie. Miss Brown, our Chaplain, blessed the animals



Breakfast Club

In Breakfast Club we celebrated our 14th birthday with Mr Samtastic, our party entertainer. The girls played games, had birthday cake and enjoyed a goody bag of delights to take home.

Why not come along to our breakfast club each day from 7:15am? At the moment the hot craze is crocheting, our girls are making scarves for teddy bears, octopuses, jelly fish and even a whale!

Food & Nutrition

Year 7 are looking at the importance of a healthy breakfast. They made a granola adding apricots and raisins and designed a bag to take it home in. Well done, girls! Your breakfasts look delicious.



Harvest Festival

On 3 October, the weather was a little cooler and the Prep school gathered to celebrate the harvest season. The hall was filled with many generous donations, which went to the Richmond Food Bank, and the girls sang with such joy.

After a welcome from Mrs McLaughlin, our chaplain Miss Brown opened our celebration with a prayer of thanksgiving followed by the Prep Choir singing 'Everybody Praise Him'. Year 4 shared their thoughts on key words for Harvest: Earth, Starve, Share and Heart, asking God to care for those in need and thanking Him for all we have. Years 2 and 3 spoke confidently and lit up the room singing 'Super Sun'. Year 5 delivered a lovely Autumnal poem and sang about all the beautiful things of the Earth, Sea and Sky. Our parent congregation joined in to sing about all creatures of our God and King, and Year 6 led us in a time of reflection and thanks once again. Prayers by Bella and Sophie were clear and articulate followed by Year 6 singing 'Thank you God for the Harvest'. The whole Prep school joined together to 'Celebrate the World' with confidence and musicality in their voices. The final prayers from Amna and Scarlett reminded us once again to be thankful for our gifts from God, and the Prep school sang an upbeat favourite about giving thanks to God for the Harvest gathered in. We wish everyone the very best as we move into shorter days, cooler nights and bonfires.

Visit to St James's Church

In RE this half term, Year 2 and 3 have been learning about the family of the Church. They visited St James's Church to learn about the features of a church and its significance to the Christian community.



Science in Medicine Competition

Earlier this year we entered Imperial's 'Science in Medicine' competition. Our team consisted of Team leader Gursharon and Lucinda, Amy, Emma, Philippa and Robyn. We were so pleased and proud to get through to the top 10 teams out of 57.



“Representing St Cat’s at a national level event was a great honour for us.”

We virtually presented our work and ideas to a panel of Academics, Professors and Doctors. This was such a wonderful experience for us and we feel we learnt so much, particularly about academic-style presenting which will benefit us as we move forward to university life next year.

We developed a device that could help patients with **takotsubo cardiomyopathy** (more commonly known as broken hearts syndrome) a condition that causes the heart muscle to weaken. The device, called the **'Intra Sub-dermal Biosensory Complex'**, consists of two parts.

- 1 The first is an implant that is inserted into the upper arm and releases oxytocin, a hormone that can help to reduce stress levels.
- 2 The second is a smart bandage that is placed over the implant and monitors the patient's cortisol levels.



If the bandage detects that the patient's cortisol levels are too high, it sends a signal to the implant to release more oxytocin. We believe that the device could help to improve the lives of patients with takotsubo cardiomyopathy by reducing the risk of recurrence and making it easier for them to manage their condition.

The project was inspired by the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to an increase in the number of cases of takotsubo cardiomyopathy. We further believe that the device could be particularly beneficial in the coming years as we recover from the pandemic and cope with the increased incidence of this disease.

Everyone enjoyed taking part in this competition. It gave us all an insight into the importance of the medical research that goes into new advancements through designing the device and researching the disease. Through this competition we learnt lots about how the human mind can affect the body in such real and tangible ways.

We loved watching everyone's presentations and seeing our future fellow researchers' ideas. It was great to see the competition we were up against and we got to learn a lot about other diseases.

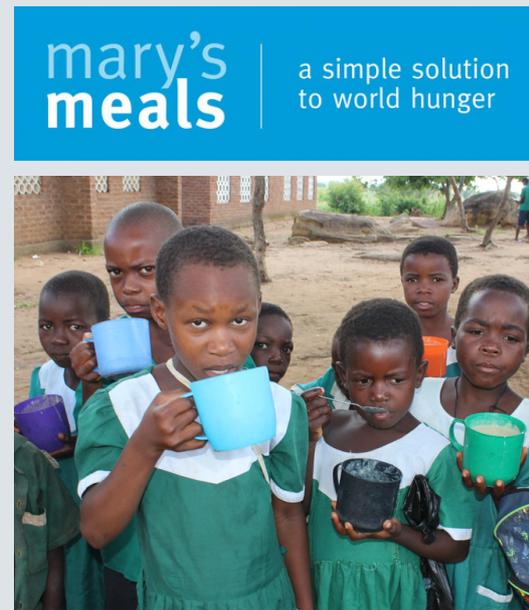
Lucinda, Year 13

St Catherine's Charities

St Catherine's main charity is Mary's Meals. From September, we have been linked to Makuta School in Eastern Malawi, which has a similar number of pupils to St Catherine's. Mary's Meals serves nutritious meals to children living in some of the poorest countries of the world. The money that we raise goes directly to Makuta School, giving the pupils nutritious meals every day. At our Harvest Festival, we raised £667.65 for Mary's Meals. The Charities Committee will be organising further fund-raising events over the coming months in support of this wonderful charity.

We also support the charity Justice Defenders, which seeks to support those who have been unjustly imprisoned in some of the poorest countries in the world. They are a voice for those who do not have a voice and train lawyers and build bridges between justice systems across Africa. At our Unity Week festival, we raised £1,022.77 for Justice Defenders.

In September, we raised £955.55 for CAFOD by holding a mufti day in support of the work they are doing in Libya and Morocco following the earthquakes that hit that region.



Sixth Form Retreat

On Wednesday 13 September all of the Sixth Form embarked on a three day residential retreat at the SPEC Centre in Pinner. Our accommodation was surrounded by a beautiful forest, which we enjoyed exploring together. The retreat provided an array of activities, from capture the flag and football, to answering theological and philosophical questions, and writing each other anonymous words of affirmation.

Alongside spiritual activities, like meditation, singing and Mass, the evenings were filled with exciting activities such as a campfire and bowling night. Taking taxis to the local town's bowling alley, the evening was full of strikes, burgers and chips, competitive spirit and laughter, during which St Catherine's new Head of Sixth Form, Mr Stringer, showed his impressive bowling skills.

This retreat was not only a restful and thought-provoking experience, but also a brilliant way for the two year groups to bond, getting to know each other away from a school environment.

Abbie, Year 13



Sport



U15 Netball

A big well done to all of the Year 10 girls supported by some super subs from Year 9 in their first game against Harrodian. Although faced with a tough opposition the girls fought hard throughout the game.

Swimming

It was great to see Hannah and Alice in Year 9 coming to help the Year 3 girls in their swimming lesson during their lunch time.



Year 3 and 4 Netball



Years 3 and 4 played a netball match against Jack and Jill School. The matches were hard-fought contests finishing with a victory for the Year 4s and a draw for Year 3. Pupils enjoyed their netball experience and are looking forward to more fixtures in the future.



FOSC NEWS

THE PREP DISCO



The Prep Disco was a fantastic event for the girls who just loved the Barbie theme - what a great success and such fun to party with Barbie!

Future FOSC activities and dates to follow.



Housekeeping / Notices



We continue to be very grateful to parents who are mindful of parking in a way that does not cause any inconvenience to local residents or pose any dangers to other road users or pedestrians.



ST CATHERINE'S SCHOOL
TWICKENHAM

TERM DATES 2023-2024

Whilst every effort is made to ensure that dates remain unchanged, we reserve the right to make adjustments if circumstances require.

AUTUMN TERM 2023	SPRING TERM 2024	SUMMER TERM 2024
Term Begins: Wed 6 Sept 2023	Term Begins: Mon 8 Jan 2024	Term Begins: Tue 16 Apr 2024
Half Term: Mon 23 Oct - Fri 3 Nov 2023	Half Term: Mon 12 Feb - Fri 16 Feb 2024	Half Term: Mon 27 May - Fri 31 May 2024
Return from Half Term: Mon 6 Nov 2023	Return from Half Term: Mon 19 Feb 2024	Return from Half Term: Mon 3 Jun 2024
Term Ends: Wed 13 Dec 2023 (staggered early finish times)	Term Ends: Wed 27 Mar 2024 (staggered early finish times)	Term Ends: Fri 5 Jul 2024 (staggered early finish times)
		St Catherine's Day: Sat 29 Jun 2024

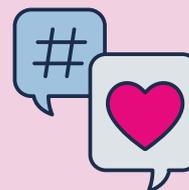


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TERM DATES 2024-2025

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AUTUMN TERM 2024	SPRING TERM 2025	SUMMER TERM 2025
Term Begins: Wed 4 Sept 2024	Term Begins: Wed 8 Jan 2025	Term Begins: Wed 23 Apr 2025
Half Term: Mon 21 Oct - Fri 1 Nov 2024	Half Term: Mon 17 Feb - Fri 21 Feb 2025	Half Term: Mon 26 May - Fri 30 May 2025
Return from Half Term: Mon 4 Nov 2024	Return from Half Term: Mon 24 Feb 2025	Return from Half Term: Mon 2 Jun 2025
Term Ends: Fri 13 Dec 2024 (staggered early finish times)	Term Ends: Fri 4 Apr 2025 (staggered early finish times)	Term Ends: Fri 4 Jul 2025 (staggered early finish times)
		St Catherine's Day: Sat 28 Jun 2025



Please remember to follow us on our various social media channels and to like and share our content. We value parent engagement and we know that word of mouth is a strong marketing tool.



SMTea



You are warmly welcome to come and join the Senior Management Team for tea on a Friday morning between 8.10am - 8.40am in the Dining Room.

"Be who God wants you to be, and you will set the world on fire." - St Catherine of Siena